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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES *Branch, OAS*

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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OCT 21 1971

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REP.

Dear Mr. Udall:

We have investigated the allegation which you forwarded to us on July 20, 1971, that 5.56 mm blank ammunition used in M-16 rifles had been wasted during training exercises conducted by the Army's 529th Military Intelligence Company at Fort Hood, Texas.

We reviewed pertinent regulations, records, and procedures and interviewed personnel of the 529th Military Intelligence Company and Headquarters, III Corps and Fort Hood. As you requested, we did not disclose the identity of the informant.

The incident described in the informant's letter did occur. The commanding officer of the company admitted that some 5.56 mm blank ammunition had been fired needlessly, but he contended that only 7,500 to 10,000 rounds, valued between \$450 and \$600, were involved rather than the 22,000 rounds reported. We could not verify the amounts because of the lack of documentary evidence.

At the time the incident occurred, the 529th Military Intelligence Company had the responsibility of providing prisoner-interrogator training. Included in this training was a 1-week field exercise designed to provide the troops with some degree of realism as to what to expect when they were assigned to field interrogation duty in Vietnam. During the field exercises aggressors attacked the compounds in an attempt to liberate the prisoners. Blank ammunition was used in the attacks and defense of the compounds.

Six classes of active and Reserve Army personnel have completed the interrogator-training program in the last year, and no future classes are planned. The informant attended the fifth class.

Several factors contributed to the incident reported. The company ordered more ammunition than it should have, the class was much smaller than had been planned, and a

[Allegation that Ammunition Was Wasted
During Training Exercises]

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management objective prescribed by higher headquarters has been misinterpreted.

We found no records supporting the quantities of 5.56 mm blank ammunition requested, nor could personnel presently assigned to the company explain how the quantities had been determined. Using the guidance contained in Army Regulations, we estimated that the company should have ordered about 13,000 blank ammunition rounds for the fifth class rather than the 30,780 rounds it forecast and ultimately received. Furthermore, only 25 of the 45 students originally expected for the fifth class actually reported. This would have further reduced the requirement from 13,000 to 9,000 rounds.

We should point out that no 5.56 mm blank ammunition was requested for the sixth class. After this class completed its field exercise, nearly 21,000 rounds were returned to stores. Although some ammunition was fired needlessly, considerable quantities apparently had been retained from earlier classes for subsequent use.

One of the operating objectives of the 5th U.S. Army's management improvement program is that unit commanders use at least 90 percent of the ammunition requirements which they forecast. They are required to explain the reasons for any shortfalls. We received the impression during our review that unit commanders believed that their efficiency ratings would be downgraded if they failed to achieve the 90-percent goal. Although the 5th Army's objective probably was to foster more accurate requirements forecasts, a different result was achieved. The ammunition was fired needlessly rather than returned to stores.

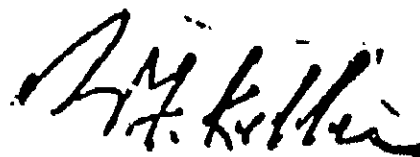
We discussed this problem with the Commanding General, III Corps and Fort Hood, and with members of his staff. He said that the failure of a unit to achieve the 90-percent goal was not intended to affect the commanders' efficiency ratings. Since commanders seemed to believe that it would, however, he said that he would cancel the requirement that explanations be given when the 90-percent goal was not

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achieved, to preclude the waste of ammunition. We were advised that Fort Hood would simplify procedures for returning ammunition to stores and would do what was necessary to preclude this type of incident from recurring.

We shall be pleased to discuss this matter with you further if you so desire.

Sincerely yours,



Deputy Comptroller General
of the United States

The Honorable Morris K. Udall
House of Representatives